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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Special needs committee finalizes plan

After 18 months of hard work, the Peninsula Special Needs Shelter Committee has finalized its plan regarding sheltering and the special needs population. Although the plan is still in the final coordination phase, it indicates the general direction in which the committee wants to head. Members are implementing this workable solution in time for the upcoming hurricane season.

"Ultimately, we want to stress that this is an individual responsibility," said Newport News Emergency Services Coordinator and committee head, Jack Williamson. "There's no way the public can expect the locality to individually pick up people with special needs and transport them to shelters or the hospital. If we tie up our emergency vehicles and ambulances in non-emergency situations, we may cost others their lives. All of the emergency managers involved in this effort are more than willing to help individuals develop their plans."

The committee's plan was designed to help people with special needs prepare an emergency plan in advance of a disaster. Some of these special needs people include those who require assistance with daily living, specialized nursing care either at home or in a facility, the bedridden and those who need machines or other types of electric-power-based technology to maintain health.

Involved jurisdictions include the cities of Hampton, Williamsburg, Newport News and Poquoson and the counties of James City and York. Some participating groups are home health care facilities, military and civilian hospitals, the Red Cross, the Area Agencies on Aging, Social Services, Central State Hospital and the Peninsula Department of Transportation.

The committee developed a one-page form titled "Special Needs Patient Emergency Preparedness Plan." The person completes the plan with the assistance of his or her provider, caregiver



or a representative from the local health department.

Not only is the person encouraged to plan for all kinds of disasters, but three different types of planning guidelines are offered under three special needs categories:

Category A includes people who can survive for the first 72 hours on their own. This plan encourages these people to prepare needed items if sheltering becomes necessary and to make plans for the duration of the disaster in the event they need to leave the shelter for a higher level of care.

Category B includes people who require skilled nursing care to prevent serious health problems within 24-48 hours. Evacuating to a safe haven is strongly recommended for the duration of the emergency. People in this category need to make sure they have adequate medication and supplies, portable power and transportation for themselves and their caregivers.

Category C includes people who will most likely require admission to a hospital. Evacuation as soon as possible is

strongly urged. These people are encouraged to plan in advance for admission and transportation to the appropriate health care facility prior to the event.

The committee is working intensively with area health care facilities to ensure the plan will be successful. "There's a responsibility on the part of medical providers to assist their patients with planning," said Williamson. "Emergency managers and local government do not have the medical expertise to help these individuals develop an effective plan."

Each jurisdiction will implement the plan differently, depending on its resources. In Newport News, the information contained on the forms will be entered in the city's Computer Automated Dispatcher system database.

The committee is putting together a media packet and is planning a massive media campaign to target their audience. The special needs population will be reached with the help of the area's health departments as well.

Williamson offered this observation to emergency managers. "If you have a significant special needs population in your area and you fail to do this planning, you may end up in a situation in which emergency resources are tied up in non-emergency situations. That could be a very difficult situation. We feel that our approach provides the public with a very effective tool to help them identify the problem, address the issue and deal with it head-on."

For more information, call Jack Williamson at 757/247-8606.

Russian city welcomes Virginia delegation

This past March, Roanoke City's Emergency Services Coordinator, Wanda Reed, helped Virginia play a part in breaking down cold war walls between Russia and the U.S.

As a member of a FEMA-sponsored delegation, she spent eight days in Russia sharing ideas and experiences with her emergency services counterparts. The trip was a result of a 1996 Memorandum of Understanding signed between the United States and Russia to further communication and the sharing of ideas.

The delegation, which included a FEMA representative and a military liaison from the National Guard Bureau, traveled to Pskov, a city with a population of about 200,000, and Roanoke's sister city in Russia. "We were encouraged by FEMA to share our experiences, information and expertise and seek ways to further cooperative efforts," said Reed. "We looked at the city's emergency services, their public health agencies, a utilities facility and we took a firsthand look at their education program."

While in Pskov, the delegation participated in parts of a command post/field exercise that lasted a day and a half. The exercise included rescuing fishermen from an ice-covered lake, fire burn and tactical operations by the city's fire department and a mass casualty incident at a local school. Both the city's business sector and the district emergency management committee participated in the exercise.

"Throughout our visit, we shared information on various emergency preparedness

issues," said Reed. "On the last day, we shared our perceptions of the exercise and the city's levels of preparedness with a large audience of military officers and government department heads. Their military is a lot more involved in emergency services than is typical in this country. My equivalent in Pskov is a military colonel. The players took their roles very seriously and the critique was a very intense activity."

Future funding for the different government departments was based, in part, on shortfalls noted during the exercise. At the same time, Reed observed, one of the major shortfalls was funding itself. "That is something most government organizations can relate to," she said. "There's never enough funding for equipment, supplies and training."

In fact, Reed noted that her Russian counterparts often have to make do with old, outdated equipment, a situation that has inspired them to develop creative ways to use the resources they have. For example, the city's emergency medical services are very limited regarding personnel and equipment, so school children are trained to perform many basic EMS procedures.

During the mass fatalities portion of the exercise, Reed was able to see this approach in action. "The students were wonderful," she said. "I was given the opportunity to assist them with CPR and procedures for controlling bleeding and bandaging techniques. Students learn to take care of themselves and others who may be injured in emergencies."

The students are trained in civil protection measures as well. They learn to don gas masks and seal them, testing how fast they can do this through timed exercises. "Every student is issued a gas mask for use during school hours," said Reed.

Reed will continue work with FEMA and its Russian counterpart, EMERCOM. Roanoke already sends about 1,500 pounds of medical supplies every year to Pskov, and Reed is raising funds to purchase at least one CPR

mannequin to send to the school for use by the students.

She is raising funds to host a delegation from Pskov that will include a school teacher, public health officials, a representative from fire services and her emergency services counterpart. "I was very impressed overall by the self-sufficiency of the Russian people," Reed said. "We will continue to identify ways to build partnerships and share information."

For more information, call Wanda Reed at 540/853-2425.

VDES division name change reflects priorities

As mitigation increasingly becomes the focus of FEMA's efforts at the federal level, states and localities are integrating mitigation into their programs at the local level. In April, the Plans Division was renamed the Preparedness and Mitigation Division to reflect this emphasis.

"The name change grew out of a need to raise the visibility of mitigation," said Division Director George Urquhart. "Although the old name may have accurately described our activities in past years, it no longer reflects the range of programs and tasks our staff currently manages. Adopting this functional terminology is in keeping with recent changes at FEMA and in concert with the Federal Response Plan."

Although planning is still one of the division's primary functions, newer responsibilities include increased preparedness activities such as assisting other state agencies with their preparedness plans. In addition, the division serves as a resource to assist localities in forming their disaster recovery committees. It is also expanding into pre-disaster mitigation planning as well as training of local officials, risk analysis and risk reduction activities.

"We want to reexamine our emergency management system and ask ourselves if our systems and structures are adequate for most of the disasters and emergencies we might face," said Urquhart. In line with this goal, the division develops legislative proposals as well as reviews and analyzes the impact of laws and regulations related to emergency services.

Urquhart said, "The name change offers our division many more opportunities to be dynamic and effective in light of emerging economic and political trends and environmental forecasts. It reflects an enlightened focus that recognizes the changing times. We feel that, in structuring ourselves this way, we will better accomplish our mission."

HAZ MAT



VDES hazmat field manager named

Former VDES Hazmat Officer Greg Britt has taken the reins of leadership. On May 1, Britt was officially appointed Hazardous Materials Field Manager for the VDES Technological Hazards Division.

Britt, who is working on a Master's Degree in Industrial Hygiene from Virginia Commonwealth University, began his hazmat career in 1984 as a Fairfax County firefighter. As he confronted a range of complex response situations that included hazmat response, he felt the need to expand his professionalism. "I was seeking more knowledge to help me with decision making out in the field," said Britt. "At that time, everyone was running away from hazmat and I wanted to know what it was all about."

Shortly after becoming certified as a firefighter technician in 1988, Britt left the department for a position as hazmat officer in the newly created, state-level hazardous materials program at VDES.

"I came in at the beginning of the creation of the division," said Britt. "Over the years, I've seen hazmat integrated into other aspects of emergency services. People now realize that hurricanes, tornadoes and other natural disasters contain potential hazmat incidents."

As one of his first priorities, Britt is working to adopt the NFPA 1500 Standards into the division's health and safety plan. He's also focusing on the professional development of the VDES hazmat officers and will work to encourage them to continue involvement at the national level.

He observed, "Our program is in the forefront and needs to stay there. To achieve this goal, we need to continue to seek out new ideas and educational opportunities. I don't see us staying where we are and thinking we can grow. We need to get out and look at the innovative thinking in other states. We have a good foundation — now we need to make the good even better in our program."

Leadership tips for the front lines

Don't push too much. Encourage your team members to do more, but know when it's too much. The signs: flaring tempers, moodiness, sarcasm.

Exhibit good values. As a leader, your example will be followed — whether or not you're trustworthy and committed.

Roll up your sleeves. Never be afraid to do what it takes to get the job done. Team members will respect you more when you show willingness to work alongside them.

(from *Leadership for the Front Lines*, by Barry J. Farber)

EMWIN: The latest in weather news

By Bill Sammler, Wakefield
Warning Coordination
Meteorologist

Emergency managers are keenly aware of the need for timely and comprehensive weather information when making weather-related decisions. Although there are several ways to obtain timely weather information, most are too expensive.

There is a low-cost, reliable means to obtain hazardous



weather information. Developed by the National Weather Service, it's called the Emergency Manager's Weather Information Network (EMWIN).

EMWIN is a national feed of weather information piped through the GOES weather satellites at 1690.6 MHz (about 400 kHz below the WEFAX frequency). The data feed is similar to what the NOAA Weather Wire provides — such as NWS text forecasts, watches and warnings — with some notable exceptions. One: the data feed is national in scope, which means that emergency managers can monitor Virginia weather information and find out what's happening in California, Missouri, or any other part of the country.

Two: some graphical information is provided through the data feed. This includes graphics of forecasts of frontal movement (and associated weather), surface maps and even some gross-scale radar data. However, the graphical information is currently low priority and may

not always be available.

Three: the system has no recurring cost. While up-front costs vary, once EMWIN is set up, the information feed is free of charge.



This makes EMWIN the most cost-effective weather information source available.

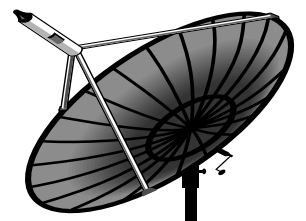
If you have a means of downloading and displaying the information directly from the satellite — GOES-8 for the eastern United States — there are a number of vendors offering both the hardware and software needed to download the signal and display the data. EMWIN currently has only one significant

drawback — speed. At this point in time, the data-stream bandwidth is only 1200 baud. Despite that rate, 50,000 pages of information are still being transmitted each day. Upgrades to the speed of the EMWIN data feed are in the works for this year.



Call Bill Sammler at 757/899-5732 (ext. 223) for information. If you want a demonstration of the software, an EMWIN

system is up and running at NWS Wakefield. You can check out the Internet site at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/oso/oso1/oso12/document/emwin.htm>. The EMWIN data stream is available live at <http://iwin.nws.noaa.gov/>



TRAINING



The Disaster Recovery Center Operations class, scheduled for September 4, has been cancelled.

EOC Management and Operations

June 10-12
Roanoke

Exercise Design

June 18-19
Salem

Professional Development: Leadership and Influence

July 8-10
Richmond

Professional Development: Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

July 11
Richmond

Introduction to Emergency Management

July 22-24
Roanoke

Coordinators' Briefing

August 6-7
Culpeper

Mass Fatalities Incident Management

August 19-21
Newport News

For information, call the VDES Training Office at 804/674-2458

Technological Hazards Division

Advanced Hazardous Materials Control

July 12-13
July 19-20
Martinsville

Public Safety Response to Terrorism

June 11
Williamsburg

July 16
Charlottesville

August 13
Roanoke

For information, call the VDES Tech Haz Division at 804/674-2510

New videos from the VDES collection

The Forgotten Victims (Length: 6 minutes)

Before Disaster Strikes (Length: 18 minutes)

Because the shelter didn't allow animals, this disaster victim opted to live on the street rather than give up his pet. If this true story resembles a situation you might face in your locality, check out these two new videos in the VDES video library.

Created by the Humane Society of the United States, the first is a short awareness video geared to the general public that encourages people to include their pets in their family disaster plans. The second demonstrates the need for animal shelters during a disaster. It touches on setting up such a shelter, shows a triage center for pets and films a mock evacuation of animals from an animal shelter.

America's Aging Network: Coping with Disasters (Length 20:20)

Narrated by Jane Wyatt, this video discusses efforts by the Federal Administration on Aging to meet the needs of senior citizens before, during and after disasters. Among other topics, it outlines various resources available and covers the role played by local Area Agencies on Aging in preparing seniors to face disasters. For information, call VDES at 804/674-2499.



Pipeline Risk Management Demonstration Project — Electronic Town Meeting

June 5
2-4:00 p.m.
This broadcast describes the U.S. Department of Transportation's innovative regulatory approach. It allows



pipeline operators to achieve superior safety performance through customizing their safety activities. Viewers can call and get more information about or comment on the projects discussed on this program.



National Alert Broadcast

June 18
2-3:30 p.m.

For satellite coordinates or further information, call 800/527-4893, 301/447-1068 or e-mail sue.downin@fema.gov



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Access the VDES homepage at:
<http://www.state.va.us/~des/des.htm>

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